Thank you for the chance to comment on the e-rate program. This program is extremely valuable to the libraries in our region and first and foremeost, I urge the FCC to increase the funding level to at least $3 billion per year to better stay in line with the funding request level.

Being new to this activity as of January 1, 2002, I was overwhelmed by the complexity of the process. Without the help of the state e-rate coordinator and other peers within Wisconsin plus the help desk at SLD, I doubt that I would have successfully submitted the 471's. In order to realistically expect the level of assistance needed from the state e-rate coordinator, please recognize that some form of recognition or compensation must be given to them.

With staff time being stretched more thinly than ever, I believe that the time needed was far out of proportion to what is
necessary or even reasonable and I strongly urge you to streamline this process! An obvious example is the BEAR form. Applicants should be able to select the payment method and BEAR checks should not ever have to be sent to the service providers and then re-issued. Discounts on POTS should be simplified and the eligible services list has led to more time taking and confusion.

Regarding cost allocations, the method used to determine library discounts is not conducive to the equitable distribution of funds.
We support having discounts for costs associated with WANS continue to be a Priority One discount.

These brief statements are not unique, based on what has been submitted to date, so I trust that staff will seriously consider changes to the e-rate program which does provide a tremendous service to libraries and their customers. Improvements to the process will make the program all the more valuable. Thank you again for this opportunity to comment.